

REMARKS

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(GREETINGS TO HOSTS, GUESTS, FRIENDS, ETC.)

I WANT TO THANK YOU ALL VERY MUCH FOR INVITING ME TO SPEAK TO YOU THIS MORNING. ~~I'M PLEASED TO PARTICIPATE IN A CONFERENCE ON THIS COMMUNITY'S RESPONSE TO THE EPIDEMIC OF AIDS.~~

~~MAY I ALSO SAY THAT I RECOGNIZE AND APPRECIATE THE LEADERSHIP SHOWN BY THE SAN FRANCISCO DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH ON THIS VERY DIFFICULT ISSUE.~~

~~THE WAR AGAINST AIDS BEGAN HERE AND THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF, FIRST, DR. MERVYN SILVERMAN AND NOW DR. DAVID WERTIGER ARE SHINING EXAMPLES OF WHAT PUBLIC HEALTH LEADERSHIP CAN ACCOMPLISH.~~

~~YOU WILL BE DISCUSSING AIDS EDUCATION, IN GENERAL AND FOR TARGET GROUPS AND SO ON, AND THAT'S FINE WITH ME. BUT I WOULD LIKE TO BE JUST A LITTLE MORE PHILOSOPHICAL, SINCE MOST OF YOU ARE HIGHLY QUALIFIED EXPERTS ON THE ISSUES TO BE DISCUSSED THIS MORNING.~~

~~I'D LIKE TO LOOK AT THIS PANDEMIC OF AIDS FROM A LITTLE DIFFERENT POINT OF VIEW. I WANT TO TALK ABOUT WHAT IT'S DOING TO SOME OF OUR PEOPLE...WHAT IT CAN DO TO ALL OF OUR PEOPLE...AND WHAT WE MUST DO TO HELP PEOPLE CONQUER AIDS, THE MOST VICIOUS OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES IN THE HISTORY OF THE HUMAN RACE.~~

LET ME CONFESS THAT, IN THE BATTLE AGAINST THIS DISEASE, MEDICINE AND SCIENCE ARE MAKING VERY SMALL HEADWAY, RELATIVE TO WHAT HAS YET TO BE ACCOMPLISHED.

IN FACT, I'LL GO EVEN FURTHER AND SAY THAT THE FINAL VICTORY OVER THIS DISEASE WILL NOT FOLLOW THE PATTERNS OF OTHER SUCH VICTORIES -- THE ONE OVER SMALLPOX, FOR EXAMPLE, OR POLIO.

NO, THIS TIME, THE VICTORY WILL PROBABLY NOT BE THE EXCLUSIVE VICTORY OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND CLINICAL PRACTICE.

THE FINAL VICTORY OVER THE DISEASE OF AIDS WILL MUCH MORE LIKELY SPRING FROM THE IMPELLING FORCE OF COMPASSIONATELY COMMITTED, ETHICALLY MOTIVATED, AND COURAGEOUS MEN AND WOMEN WITH LITTLE OR NO MEDICAL BACKGROUND AT ALL.

LET ME TAKE A LITTLE TIME TO EXPLAIN THAT OBSERVATION.

EVERYTHING THE PUBLIC THINKS AND DOES ABOUT AIDS SEEMS TO BE RELATED TO THE THREE BASIC ASPECTS OF THE DISEASE:

FIRST OF ALL, IN SPITE OF ALL WE'VE LEARNED ABOUT THIS VIRUS IN THE PAST 6 YEARS, AIDS IS STILL PRETTY MUCH OF A MYSTERY, ESPECIALLY TO THE PUBLIC. WE KNOW HOW IT'S TRANSMITTED, FOR EXAMPLE. AND WE ALSO KNOW HOW IT ATTACKS AND DESTROYS THE HUMAN IMMUNE SYSTEM. BUT WE DON'T KNOW WHY IT DOES THAT AND WE STILL CAN'T PREDICT WHEN THE AIDS VIRUS WILL -- OR WILL NOT -- PROCEED ON ITS DESTRUCTIVE PATH. SO, FIRST ON OUR LIST IS MYSTERY.


BUT MEDICAL SCIENCE DOES NOT THRIVE ON MYSTERY...IT THRIVES ON DISCOVERY. AND DISCOVERY STILL SEEMS TO BE SOME DISTANCE AWAY FROM US.

AIDS IS A MYSTERY...BUT IT'S NOT ONLY A MYSTERY. IT'S AN ENORMOUS HUMAN CATASTROPHE...A DISEASE THAT HAS AFFLICTED MORE THAN 44,000 AMERICANS...OF WHOM NEARLY 26,000 HAVE ALREADY DIED.

MANY PEOPLE DENY THAT THEY ARE NOW -- OR COULD EVER BE -- INFECTED WITH THE AIDS VIRUS, EVEN THOUGH THEY MAY ENGAGE IN HIGH-RISK BEHAVIOR...ANAL INTERCOURSE, FOR EXAMPLE, OR NEEDLE-SHARING AMONG I.V. DRUG ABUSERS.

BUT MORE IMPORTANT, MANY PEOPLE WHO DO NOT ENGAGE IN ANY HIGH-RISK BEHAVIOR AT ALL AND ARE WILL PROBABLY NEVER CATCH AIDS, ARE READY TO GIVE UP ON PEOPLE WHO DO HAVE AIDS.

BUT THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT WE CANNOT DO...WE CANNOT GIVE UP ON PEOPLE...WE HAVE NO MORAL RIGHT TO ABANDON ANOTHER PERSON.

AND THAT'S THE THREAT FROM THIS ASPECT OF AIDS...THE THREAT RAISED BY ITS MYSTERY. 

 ITSELF...

~~WE WILL~~ ACCEPT THE CONTINUING CATASTROPHE OF LOSS OF HUMAN LIFE...

WE WILL DENY THAT MANKIND IS SUPERIOR TO THIS DISEASE...

BUT IN THIS TERRIBLE AND FEARSOME PERIOD, I MAINTAIN -- AS A PHYSICIAN, AS A SCIENTIST, BUT ALSO AS A HUMAN BEING -- THAT MAN CANNOT BE DENIED.

AIDS -- BY ITSELF -- WOULD MAKE US DO THAT.

PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN TOTAL FEAR OF AIDS WOULD HAVE US DO THAT.

AND SOME PEOPLE WEAKENED BY THE DESPAIR OF AIDS, SEEING PATIENTS DIE OF IT, WOULD HAVE US DO THAT.

BUT WE CANNOT.

AND THAT'S WHY WE MUST RECOGNIZE THIS ASPECT OF MYSTERY FOR WHAT IT IS...AND OVERCOME IT.

THE SECOND FACT ABOUT AIDS THAT COLORS ALL WE SAY AND DO IS THAT THE DISEASE IS VIRTUALLY 100 PERCENT FATAL.

I MENTIONED A MOMENT AGO THAT THE DISEASE HAS ATTACKED MORE THAN 44,000 PEOPLE SINCE JUNE OF 1981 AND THAT ALMOST 26,000 OF THOSE PEOPLE HAVE ALREADY DIED.

THAT'S THE TRUTH...BUT THERE'S MORE. THE TRUTH ALSO INCLUDES THE FACT THAT, OF THOSE PEOPLE WHO HAD AIDS IN 1981, AT LEAST 91 PERCENT OF THEM HAVE ALREADY DIED.

OF THOSE WHO HAD THE DISEASE IN 1982, SOME 87 PERCENT HAVE
ALREADY DIED.

OF THOSE IN 1983, 89 PERCENT OF THEM HAVE ALREADY DIED OF AIDS.

AND SO ON.

AIDS IS THE CLOSEST THING IN OUR ENVIRONMENT TODAY TO BEING A
"VIRTUALLY 100 PERCENT FATAL DISEASE."

~~WE HAVE NO DRUGS COMING INTO THE MARKETPLACE -- A.Z.T.~~

~~ENVIRONMENT AMONG THEM AND THESE DRUGS HELP PROLONG LIFE A~~

~~LITTLE BIT...A FEW MONTHS...MAYBE A YEAR OR SO.~~

~~WE~~ WE HAVE NOTHING AT ALL...NOTHING... THAT WILL SAFELY AND
EFFECTIVELY STOP THE DISEASE OF AIDS IN ITS TRACKS.

WE HAVE NO DRUGS...NO VACCINES...NO MAGIC BULLETS...NOTHING
THAT CAN ACCOMPLISH THAT LIFE-SAVING JOB.

WHAT DO WE HAVE? ONLY EDUCATION.

~~NOW, SOME PEOPLE CALL IT "EDUCATION" OTHERS CALL IT "PUBLIC~~

~~IMPORTANCE" AND STILL OTHERS CALL IT "CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING."~~

AL [REDACTED] DO, BECAUSE THEY ARE ALL [REDACTED] THE
 SOMETHING.

IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT WE TELL THE PUBLIC, WHOSE SYMPATHY AND COOPERATION ARE SORELY NEEDED, THAT -- AT THE MOMENT -- DEATH IS THE PARTNER OF PEOPLE WITH AIDS.

IT'S A GREAT MISTAKE TO UNDERESTIMATE THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS SECOND ASPECT OF AIDS -- ITS VIRTUALLY 100 PERCENT MORTALITY RATE -- BECAUSE THIS FACT IS ALREADY RAISING THE POSSIBILIITY OF ABANDONMENT IN THE MINDS OF OTHERWISE RESPONSIBLE PEOPLE.

I'VE BEEN HEARING STORIES OF SOME PHYSICIANS AND NURSES -- VERY FEW, THANK GOODNESS, BUT EVEN ONE IS ONE TOO MANY -- PHYSICIANS AND NURSES WHO DON'T WANT TO TREAT AIDS PATIENTS BECAUSE OF THE DANGER OF BECOMING INFECTED WITH THE VIRUS THEMSELVES.

[REDACTED]...I KNOW...AND THEY KNOW THAT SUCH A DANGER IS MINUSCULE...AT THE VERY MOST.

YET WE ALL WATCHED THE TELEVISION NEWS COVERAGE OF THE TRAGEDY OF THE RAY FAMILY IN ARCADIA, FLORIDA...REJECTED AND EXPELLED NOT ONLY BY PLAIN TOWNSPEOPLE BUT ALSO BY EDUCATORS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS.

I THINK THEY MAY BE TRYING TO TELL US SOMETHING ELSE...SOMETHING SO CONTRARY TO WESTERN ETHICAL TRADITIONS THAT THEY SIMPLY CANNOT BRING THEMSELVES TO SAY IT STRAIGHT OUT. BUT I THINK THEY MIGHT BE TRYING TO SAY WHAT SOME HAVE ALREADY SAID TO ME...

"WE DON'T CARE, BECAUSE THESE PEOPLE WITH AIDS ARE AS GOOD AS DEAD ANYWAY."

THAT'S A HORRIBLE STATEMENT, AND THE FIRST MOMENT IT IS SAID IT MUST STIMULATE US TO EXTEND EVEN FURTHER OUR CALL FOR COMPASSION FOR PEOPLE WITH AIDS.

THERE IS A MESSAGE THAT EACH OF US MUST DELIVER TO THE WORLD EVERY DAY. THE INEVITABILITY OF DEATH FROM THE DISEASE OF AIDS SHOULD NOT -- BY ITSELF -- CAUSE THE VICTIMS OF AIDS TO BE ABANDONED AND, IN THE WORDS OF THE PHILOSOPHER MARTIN BUBER, GIVEN THE "FORETASTE OF DEATH."

WE HAVE NO REASON TO LET THAT HAPPEN.

SO THERE IS THE MYSTERY OF AIDS.

AND THERE IS THE CERTAINTY OF DEATH FROM AIDS.

AND FINALLY, THERE IS THE THIRD ASPECT OF THE DISEASE OF AIDS THAT IS POSED TO ME IN JUST ABOUT EVERY QUESTION-AND-ANSWER PERIOD WHEREVER I SPEAK. AND IT'S THAT PEOPLE GET AIDS BECAUSE THEY DO THINGS MOST OTHER PEOPLE DON'T DO AND DON'T APPROVE OF DOING.

BUT THIS THIRD ASPECT OF THE ISSUE OF AIDS IS EVEN MORE COMPLICATED THAN IT SEEMS.

IN ADDITION TO THE 28,000 HOMOSEXUALS AND BISEXUAL MALES WHO HAVE HAD AIDS, WE MUST ADD THE 10,000 DRUG ADDICTS WHO HAVE SHARED DIRTY NEEDLES AND OTHER PARAPHERNALIA AND, BY SUCH ACTIONS, SPREAD THE DISEASE OF AIDS EVEN FURTHER.

THE VAST MAJORITY OF AMERICANS DON'T "SHOOT" DRUGS, BELIEVE ME. NOR DO THEY APPROVE OF PEOPLE WHO DO.

IN ADDITION, OF THOSE DRUG ADDICTS WITH AIDS, THERE ARE 4 BLACKS AND LATINOS FOR EACH WHITE PERSON. SO THERE IS YET ANOTHER ELEMENT OF SOCIAL RANCOR AND DIVISION THAT FILLS OUT THIS THIRD ASPECT OF AIDS.

IN OTHER WORDS, 90 PERCENT OF THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE THE DISEASE OF AIDS CONTRACTED IT WHILE THEY WERE ENGAGING IN HIGH-RISK BEHAVIOR, OF WHICH THE MAJORITY OF THE PUBLIC DISAPPROVE.

NOW THAT THEY HAVE THE DISEASE, IT IS A VIRTUAL CERTAINTY THAT THEY WILL DIE.

AND THE REST OF US WILL BE WITNESS TO THEIR DEATHS, YET WE WILL HAVE NOTHING AT HAND TO PREVENT THOSE DEATHS.

SOME DAY, WE MAY WELL HAVE A BIOMEDICAL CURE FOR AIDS...A VACCINE THAT IS BOTH SAFE AND EFFECTIVE AND GENERALLY AVAILABLE.

BUT WHO SHOULD BE THE FIRST PEOPLE TO GET IT? MY GUESS WOULD BE THOSE VERY SAME PEOPLE WHO PRACTICE HIGH-RISK BEHAVIOR

WILL THE AMERICAN PEOPLE BE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND THAT? I HOPE SO...BUT I'M NOT REALLY SURE THEY'RE READY YET.

LIKE IT OR NOT, WE ARE IN THE MIDST OF AN EPIDEMIC THAT IS TESTING NOT ONLY OUR CAPABILITIES IN BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH AND CLINICAL PRACTICE...BUT IT'S ALSO TESTING OUR CAPABILITIES AS HUMAN BEINGS WHO HAVE BEEN RAISED IN -- AND WHO ARE PRESUMABLY STILL COMMITTED TO -- THE AFFIRMATIVE ETHICAL, MORAL, AND RELIGIOUS

TRADITIONS OF OUR COUNTRY. *SOME WHO VIEW PWA AS IMMORAL ARE WILLING TO BE IMMORAL IN HOW THEY REACT.*

THOSE TRADITIONS HAVE BEEN LIVED BY MILLIONS OF PEOPLE WHOSE NAMES WE WILL NEVER KNOW, BUT WHO MUST HAVE LIVED THAT WAY FOR US TO HAVE ARRIVED AT THIS POINT AT ALL.

→ THIS IS NOT AN EASY TIME FOR US, EVEN FOR THOSE OF US WHO HAVE HAD THE TRAINING AND THE EDUCATION AND THE PROFESSIONAL COMMITMENT AND SO ON.

HOW MUCH HARDER, THEN, IS IT FOR OUR NEIGHBORS TO BE COURAGEOUS ...TO BE WISE...AND TO BE INVOLVED?

SOMETIMES THOSE OF US IN PUBLIC HEALTH WILL RECOGNIZE A DISEASE FOR WHICH MEDICINE ITSELF CAN OFFER ONLY A PARTIAL CURE, WHILE THE SOCIAL AND SPIRITUAL STRENGTH OF SOCIETY MUST COME UP WITH THE REST.

I BELIEVE THAT AIDS IS SUCH A DISEASE AND, THEREFORE -- YOU AND I AND AS MANY OTHERS AS WILL JOIN WITH US -- WE HAVE MUCH WORK TO DO...TOGETHER.

[REDACTED]

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NUMBERS
COLEMAN
REBERSON
WARNER

MORALITY

BENNETT HAS NO CORNER ON THE MARKET
RUBIN & ABSTINENCE

I AM SO OF ALL - WILLING TO ABANDON NONE

TESTING
CONFIDENTIALITY

} YOUR QUESTION